

Mr. Carter informs me that the *Haliphysema tubulatum* (P. Z. S. 1873, p. 29, t. vii.) is a massive form of his *Dictyocylindrus* of the British coast; the colour and spicules are nearly the same. There is, in the collection of Ceylon sponges, a specimen whose complement of spicules equals, if not surpasses, all sponges of its kind. See Mr. Carter's description and illustration of this species, Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. 1871, vii. p. 268, t. 17, from a small piece found on *Ectyon sparsus*. Mr. Holdsworth's specimen is half as big as a man's head. This sponge is my *Acarnus innominatus*.

Mr. Carter informs me, *Isodictya Donnani* of this paper is no *Isodictya* at all! It is allied to *Dictyocylindrus*. It is of a fibrous horny structure, the spicules in distinct fibres in little tufts on the surface at the end, whereas *Isodictya* has no horny fibre, only spicules matted into a kind of fibre with amorphous sarcode. This sponge is very abundant on the Pearl-banks; indeed we have specimens of it in the British Museum, presented by Captain Belcher; and I greatly doubt its being an unnamed species.

Mr. Carter finds *Spongionella* has a simple horny fibre, not enclosed in any sand or spicule, confirming its being *Spongia papyracea* of Esper.

On Ursus euryrhinus, Nilsson. By Dr. J. E. GRAY, F.R.S. &c.

In the 'Catalogue of Carnivorous Mammalia in the British Museum,' p. 235, I referred to the genus *Helarctos*, with doubt, a bear described by Prof. Nilsson in his account of Swedish Mammalia, under the name of *Ursus euryrhinus*, which he described from a skull in the Museum of Lund, said to have come from Hungary.

Prof. Nilsson, in February of this year, kindly presented to the British Museum a plaster cast of this skull, by which I observe that the skull is evidently from an animal long kept in confinement, and much altered from its usual shape, so that I should be unable to determine to what species it really belongs, or even whether it is distinct from the common European bear.

File-fish (Balistes capriscus) at Weymouth.

A specimen of the file-fish was taken on the 14th of May off the Portland Breakwater, on a pout-line baited with a lobworm, and has been sent to the British Museum by Mr. William Thompson, who has kindly made the following notes:—

"The fish was $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches long to the centre of the caudal fin; the length from the caudal to the extremity of the longer outer ray 2 inches, making the entire length $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches; the greatest depth $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The colour dark smoky grey, very much lighter (almost white) on the under parts; the two dorsal, the anal, and caudal fins spotted, lined, and blotched with ultramarine blue." Mr. Thompson observes that the illustrations of Couch and Yarrell must have been taken from a fish that had lost the outer ray of the caudal fin, which is the case with Couch's specimen which he sent to the British Museum. Mr. Thompson says that he has taken two anchovies, a sea-lamprey 14, and a sand-launce $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.

The file-fish has been several times during the summer season

on the south-west coast of England, especially towards the western side of it. I suppose it wanders here from the Mediterranean, perhaps accompanying several of the Cetacea and fish of those seas or the warmer parts of the North-east Atlantic, and must be considered an occasional visitor; and it would be curious to learn whether any of these wanderers ever find their way back to their breeding-grounds or native regions.—J. E. GRAY.

Necessity of a Common Language in Natural Science.

By Professor T. THORELL, of Upsala.

“It may be asked why I, in my catalogue of arachnological literature, have not included any other works than those written in Latin or in the living languages of Teutonic or Roman origin. The reason is, not that I undervalue what may have been written in other languages (which I am very far from doing), but simply that I am unable to understand even the titles of works written in, for example, Russian, Polish, Bohemian, Finnish, or Magyar; and thus I have only by accident come to learn that a couple of works in these languages treat on arachnological subjects.

“It may in general be taken for granted that a person of liberal education has some acquaintance with Latin, and knows at least one Teutonic and one Romanic language; and when this is the case, he can, without any great waste of time, learn so much of the others as to be able, with the help of a grammar and dictionary, to understand the purely descriptive works within his own department that are written in those languages. This is probably the reason why, in determining questions of priority, it is customary to attribute as much importance to works written in, for instance, Portuguese or Swedish as to those written in any of the more generally studied languages. But it is, of course, impossible to assign the same weight to *all* languages. No naturalist can have time to acquire the knowledge of all the *European* languages which have already a scientific literature to show; and the languages of this part of the world will assuredly not long continue to keep exclusive possession of that territory. It would seem, therefore, to be absolutely necessary, even for the future, in the selection of the works of which a zoologist or botanist ought to be expected to possess a knowledge, and which, in the determination of questions of priority, ought to be taken into account, to confine one's self to those which are written in the living languages of Teutonic or Roman origin and in Latin.

“The want of a *common* scientific language will unquestionably become gradually more and more felt; and as a return to Latin can hardly be expected, it is not improbable that *English* may some time or other acquire that rank, not only because that language is far more widely diffused over every part of the earth than any other culture-language, and that already two of the greatest nations publish in it the results of their scientific labours, but because English, on account of its simple grammar and as combining in nearly the same degree Teutonic and Romanic elements, is by most Europeans more easily acquired than any other language.”—*Remarks on Synonyms of European Spiders*, 1873, p. 583 (a work written entirely in elegant idiomatic English).